Black & White: Racial Identity and Its Relationship with Academic Success

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Agenda

1. Racial identity for white students and how this affects their academic performance.
2. Racial identity for black students, and how this affects their academic performance.
3. Strategies to foster positive racial identity that will lead to successful academic outcomes
4. Questions
White Identity

“Whites generally do not see themselves as members of a racial group. To the extent that their own racial group membership is deemphasized, so too is their awareness regarding the impact of racism on their own psychological development. Consequently, they do not understand or appreciate the significance of race or racism in the lives of People of Color.”

(Diversity, Community, & Achievement, 2011)
White Consciousness: Experiments in History Classrooms (Martell, 2016)

- White students’ perspectives are more aligned with what they have learned in school.
- White students believe that everybody’s history is being taught.
- “A Race-conscious focus helped my White students see White privilege in the past, but not in the present.”
Internalized Racial Oppression

- “People of color come to believe, act on, or enforce the dominant system of beliefs about themselves...” (DiAngelo, 2012).
- Internalizing feelings of inferiority begins around the age of 3 (DiAngelo, 2012).
Internalized Racial Oppression

- Adolescence--Who am I?
  - Self-discovery
  - Identity formation

- “Research suggests that Black students’ racial identity impacts academic achievement and school behaviors” (Carter, 2008). Absorbing messages of academic inferiority often results in internalized oppression.
Internalized Racial Oppression

- Black students often become disengaged in school.
  - Internalization of negative stereotypes related to academic competence (Ellis, 2015)

- Subconsciously act on feelings of inferiority
  - Feelings of self-doubt, low self-esteem, inferiority, and an overall negative racial identity (DiAngelo, 2012)
Black Racial Identity Theory

-Racial Identity one of the most heavily researched aspects of Black psychology (Sellers, 1997)

-Controversy with strong identification with racial groups
  -In the past, arguments over whether a good or bad thing

-Use of different conceptual and operational definitions of racial identity
  -Difficult to interpret inconsistencies of findings across studies
Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)

- Identity theory model specific for African Americans (Sellers, 1997)

- Great deal of diversity and variety with respect to the meaning of being African American

- MMRI attempts to describe attitudes and beliefs that may influence behaviors

- These properties are Salience, Centrality, Ideology, Regard
The MMRI Chart

(Durden, 2014)
Multi-Dimensional Inventory of Black Identity Scale (MIBI)

- “Paper and Pencil” instrument (Sellers, 1997)

- Generally measures three constructs of MMRI - Salience not included

- Used in a plethora of studies regarding Black racial identity
Dorinda J. Carter’s Critical Race Identity Study

- African American Adolescents from nine high schools (Carter, 2008)

- Ages ranged from 15-17, 13 females and 7 males

- MIBI test administered, individual interviews with each student

- Data focuses on students’ attitudes and beliefs about race, schooling and success.
Findings

-High private regard and high racial centrality were instrumental (Carter, 2008)

-Interrelatedness of positive racial self-conception (private regard), and critical race consciousness

-With this knowledge students can build a shield from a lot of the negative effects of racism
What can we DO as teachers?

First and foremost we must confront our own biases and understand where they come from.

- Scaffold instruction.
- Show your students how they can succeed in your classroom.
- Show your students how they can succeed in the outside world.
- Do your research.
- Look within.
- Don’t hide from conversations about race.
Additional Resources

- LatinX Racial Identity
- Asian-American Racial Identity
  - Kim (2012)
- Multi-racial Racial Identity
  - Rockquemore & Brunsma (2002)